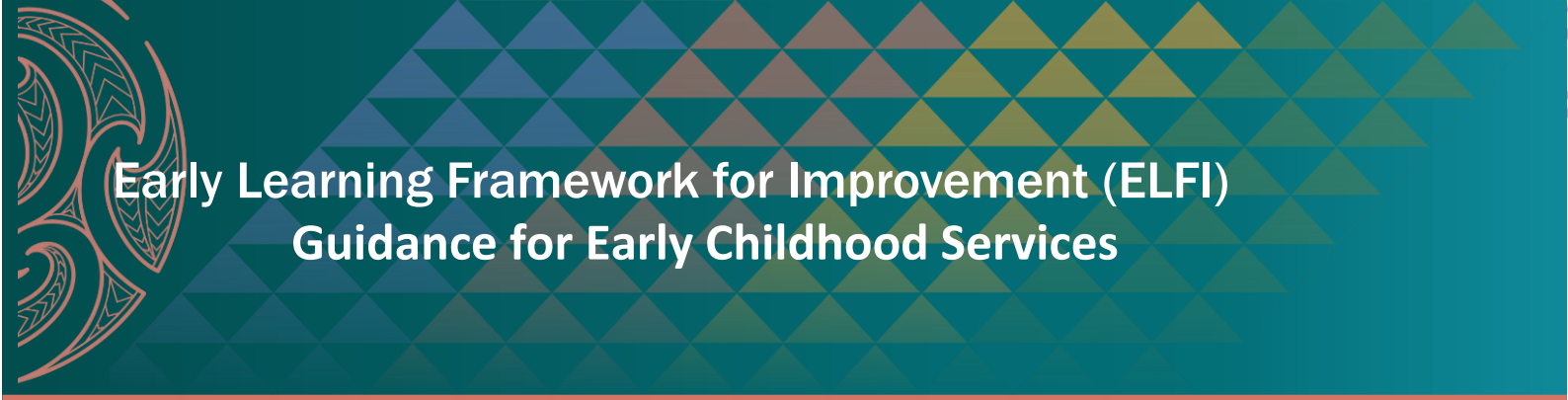




Early Learning Framework for Improvement (ELFI) Guidance for Early Childhood Services

What is the Early Learning Framework for Improvement (ELFI)?

The Early Learning Framework for Improvement (ELFI) is an evaluation tool that supports ERO and services to make judgements about the quality of education and care, helping to identify where a service is on a continuum of quality and what meaningful next steps towards excellence might look like.

The ELFI has been developed with *Te Ara Poutama: Indicators of quality for early childhood education – what matters most* (2020), *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum* (2017), and the Licensing Criteria at its core. It is reflective of the evidence and research base for early childhood education within the New Zealand context.

The ELFI replaces the Early Childhood Education (ECE) - Improvement framework (teacher-led services) used in ERO's previous quality evaluations.

Who uses it?

The ELFI is used by **both** ERO Review Officers and early childhood service leaders, kaiako, and those responsible for management and governance.

- ERO Review Officers use the ELFI as part of the Phase Two quality evaluation pathway. This framework supports Review Officer judgements about quality at or above the Regulatory Standards.
- In ERO's refreshed evaluation approach, early childhood services will also use the ELFI to self-assess and make judgements about the quality of their practice, as part of the ERO review process. This includes using the ELFI to reflect on the quality of their practice ahead of a review visit, informed by their own evidence, so they can share with ERO what they know about their service and how well they are supporting children's learning, development, and wellbeing.

Why use it?

The ELFI supports your service to understand and improve performance, with a strong focus on outcomes for children. It helps you to:

- understand how well your service is performing
- keep the focus on what is happening for children, not just intentions
- consider quality practice alongside regulatory responsibilities
- identify strengths and what you are doing well
- recognise that improvement happens over time — small steps matter
- highlight areas that could be strengthened
- focus on what will have the greatest impact for children

- prioritise actions that will make the greatest difference for children.

How is the ELFI structured?

The ELFI is based on two Domains:

- Curriculum, Teaching & Learning
- Leadership, Governance & Management

The two domains are unpacked into seven sub-domains and nineteen supporting indicators. See Table 1. The supporting indicators are presented on a quality continuum of ‘improvement required (non-compliance identified),’ ‘meeting,’ ‘doing well’ and ‘excelling.’



The continuum shows how practice develops over time. Services can consider where their current practice sits on the continuum and then use the descriptions to the right of that point to help identify the next priority steps for improvement.

Table 1: Domains, Sub Domains and Supporting Indicators

Domains	Sub Domains	Supporting Indicators
1. Curriculum, Teaching & Learning	1. Progress	1.1 Outcomes for learners 1.2 Learning-focused partnerships
	2. Engagement and belonging	2.1 Engaged in meaningful learning experiences 2.2 Sense of belonging
	3. Teaching practices including early literacy and maths	3.1 Intentional teaching practice 3.2 Support children’s social competence 3.3 Supporting children’s literacy and math learning 3.4 Purposeful learning environments
	4. Curriculum and assessment	4.1 Curriculum, planning, implementation, and evaluation 4.2 Priorities for children’s learning 4.3 Assessment for learning
	5. Equity and inclusion	5.1 Equitable and inclusive practices 5.2 Culturally responsive practices 5.3 Integrates te reo and Tikanga Māori
2. Leadership, Governance & Management	6. Leadership	6.1 Enacting plans and priorities for improvement 6.2 Supporting professional practice, curriculum implementation, and resourcing 6.3 Parent and whānau involvement in decision making

	7. Service improvement	7.1 Planning for improvement – annual and strategic 7.2 Regular review, evaluation, and reporting
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What is the Quality in Our Service Tool?

The **Quality in Our Service Tool** is an **optional document** that services may choose to complete before an ERO review. It provides an opportunity to share your judgements against the seven Sub Domains reflecting the judgements you made against the 19 Supporting Indicators in your self-assessment in the **Early Learning Framework for Improvement (ELFI)**. While ERO requires some information from all services as stated in the Notification email, the **Quality in Our Service Tool** allows you to provide further supporting information if you choose to.

If using the **Quality in Our Service Tool**, you are encouraged to be selective when referencing the information or evidence you have onsite. The Supporting Indicators in the ELFI and the Sub Domains in this Tool are aligned, and one example of evidence may support your judgements in more than one Sub Domain. Where appropriate, you may add a note to highlight these connections directly on the Tool.

What is the Possible Sources of Evidence document?

The **Possible Sources of Evidence** document is designed to support you to provide examples of the kind of information you may wish to draw on when completing the **Quality in Our Service Tool**. These examples are intended as a guide only, and services may choose to use other sources of information or evidence that best reflect their context and practice.

How do you use the ELFI to make judgements about your service?

Step 1: Get Started

- Firstly, please familiarise yourselves with the following:
 - ✓ **Early Learning Framework for Improvement (ELFI) Checkbox Template**
 - ✓ **Guidance for ELFI - ECE Services (this document)**
 - ✓ **Quality in Our Service Tool (Optional)**
 - ✓ **Possible Sources of Evidence**

Step 2: Select Your focus

Using the **Early Learning Framework for Improvement (ELFI) Checkbox Template**

- Choose an ELFI Sub Domain and Supporting Indicator to focus on and read across the framework.
- Look at how practice is described across the continuum and what changes as practice strengthens.
- Making judgements for each Supporting Indicator in each Sub Domain may require some analysis of information to demonstrate service-level performance.

Step 3: Consider evidence

- Consider the evidence that you might have to support your judgement for each Supporting Indicator.
- Consider what you already know from everyday practice — what is happening for children, what is documented, what has been observed, and what kaiako and leaders can share.

- You can refer to the **Possible Sources of Evidence** document for guidance. The examples given, are intended as a guide only, and services may choose to use other sources of information that best reflect their context and practice.

Step 4: Strengthen your evidence base

- Drawing on multiple sources of evidence can support your judgements where relevant.

Step 5: Make your judgement for each Supporting Indicator

- Make a “best fit” judgement for each Supporting Indicator by selecting the descriptions that most closely reflect your practice, supported by your evidence. Record your judgements on the **ELFI Checkbox Template** in the box you can check ☐.

Submit to ERO

- The completed **EFLI Checkbox Template** is forwarded to the Review Coordinator before the on-site visit.
- Prior to your ERO visit, the review team will consider your ELFI judgements alongside the other requested information listed in your Notification email. Onsite, the review team will validate and verify this information using documentation, observations, conversations with you, and request any additional evidence needed.

How do you use the Quality in Our Service Tool to support our ELFI judgements? (Note that use is optional)

Step 1: Deciding one overall judgement for each Sub Domain.

- Use your judgements about the supporting indicators from the **ELFI Checkbox Template** to make one overall “best fit” judgement for each Sub Domain, based on your evidence and any analysis you have done.

Step 2: Recording your judgement for each Sub Domain

- Record your overall judgement for each Sub Domain in the **Quality in Our Service Tool**.
- In the right-hand column, list the key evidence that supports your judgement. Only names of key documents need to be recorded in the right column.
- You may add notes to your document to show how information in the right-hand column supports multiple sub-domains, where relevant.

Step 3: Identify evidence gaps

- If your service does not have the evidence for each Sub Domain, you can note this on **your Quality in Our Service Tool** where relevant.

Step 4: Submit to ERO

- The completed **Quality in Our Service Tool** is forwarded to the Review Coordinator before the on-site visit. Please do not send in the examples of the evidence you have identified in the right column.

- Prior to the ERO visit, the review team will consider your ELFI judgements alongside the other requested information listed in your Notification email, and your completed Quality in Our Service Tool if you chose to complete it. During the onsite visit, the review team will verify and validate this information through documentation, observations, conversations with you, and any additional evidence require.